



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

APR 25 2000

Ms. Jeanne Voorhees
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1
1 Congress Street, Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02114-2023

APR 27 2000

STATE PROGRAM UNIT

Dear Ms. Voorhees:

This responds to your April 6, 2000, letter requesting comments on the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's proposed Water Quality Standards revisions.

Several endangered and threatened species have been documented in Connecticut waters. Federally listed sea turtles inhabit the marine waters off the Connecticut coast, and shortnose sturgeon occur in the Connecticut River. However, there has been limited analyses conducted on the effects of water quality criteria (i.e., toxics) on these species.

NMFS does have some concern about the water quality in the Connecticut River. Estimates of the total adult shortnose sturgeon population in the Connecticut River have reached 1200 fish (Kynard 1998). The effective breeding population has been estimated at approximately 400 fish, but it appears that not every mature female spawns successfully. In the Connecticut River, one of four female shortnose sturgeon removed for egg culture in 1988 could not spawn due to a tumor. We are concerned that the presence of these tumors and the resulting decrease in reproduction could impede recovery of the Connecticut River distinct population segment of shortnose sturgeon. We would appreciate any information the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) might have as to the potential connection between any contaminants in the Connecticut River and the presence of those tumors.

At this time however, NMFS does not have any additional concerns related to the proposed Water Quality Standards revisions that will not be raised by the EPA. If you have any additional questions, please contact Carrie McDaniel at (978) 281-9388.

Sincerely,

Christopher Mantzaris
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Protected Resources

cc: Ludwig



Literature Cited

Kynard, B. 1998. Twenty-two years of passing shortnose sturgeon in fish lifts on the Connecticut River: What has been learned? In: Fish migration and fish bypasses, M. Jungwirth, S. Schmutz, and S. Weiss, Editors. pp. 255-264.

File code: 1514-05 (A), EPA General